

BLOOMFIELD CITIZEN.

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THE FIRST JENNY LIND TICKET

BY F. T. BARNUM.

In my lectures on "Success in Life," I give among many rules, three that are indispensable: first, that a man must gain the confidence of the public as an upright, honest, conscientious man, thereby retaining the faith and goodwill of all whom he may deal with; second, to supply the best that can be procured; and third, to advertise these facts in every proper and feasible manner that reflection and foresight can suggest. I give herewith an illustration of the advantages arising from the above conditions.

When I engaged Jenny Lind to come to America in 1851-2 the price that I contracted to pay her was so enormous for those times that most persons thought it would effect my financial ruin. But I knew I had the very best attraction of the kind in the world at that time; and as the people would find that out as soon as they heard her sing, my first endeavor was to contrive to get them to attend her earliest concerts. To that end I adopted every conceivable plan that I thought best calculated to stir up the whole country into a wild excitement before the "Swedish Nightingale," "the Divine Jenny" should set foot upon our shores.

In my "Autobiography" are given numerous devices to which I resorted for this purpose. I knew that the fabulous sum of money that I was to pay for her dulcet notes would of itself be a big advertisement; that people would begin to wonder what the price of tickets would have to be in order even to reimburse me; that many would fear they would not be able to pay the price charged, etc.

This was exactly the state of public feeling a week before her arrival, when I announced that, in order to give all desirous to hear Jenny Lind an equal chance, the tickets would be sold at public auction, starting at the nominal of three dollars per ticket. It was acknowledged that this plan was fair, but the wonder grew as to how many times the "nominal price" the choice seats would bring in this public competition. All over the United States, and indeed, Europe, the excited people were waiting for the news on this point which would reach them as soon as possible after the sale.

For ten days preceding the auction the newspapers were full of predictions regarding the price of tickets. Everybody wanted to attend the first concert, and orders from all parts of the country were sent to friends in New York to secure tickets, if they could be bought at prices that were not utterly fabulous.

It is every man's business to exercise the greatest possible foresight, whereby his calling can in an honest way be made most profitable. I clearly saw that the sale of Jenny Lind tickets would necessarily have in the existing excited state of the public mind; and that the higher the prices obtained, the more would the frenzy be increased. Thereof, three days before the auction of concert tickets was to come off, I went quietly down to John N. Genin, a popular hat maker, and told him I had a secret business suggestion to impart, which, if shrewdly managed, would, as I believed, help him thousands of dollars as an advertisement.

"What is it?" eagerly asked Mr. Genin.

"Did of the first Jenny Lind ticket," I replied; "and the higher the price paid, the greater the renown will give you all over the country within twenty four hours after its purchase."

Genin, who was a good advertiser, instantly saw his opportunity, and seizing my hand, with an air of delight, he eagerly exclaimed, "Barnum, you have made my fortune. This is but one chance in a lifetime. I will buy the first Jenny Lind ticket, but I will not mention it, even to my wife, till I have secured it."

On reflection, I feared that this brilliant idea might not strike anybody else, and consequently the bidding would not run very high, but as I knew that any business man who bought the first ticket would be a great gainer thereby, I quietly called on Dr. Brandreth, the great pill maker, and a tremendous advertiser. I tasked for a private interview. The doctor invited me into his office, and locking the door, pointed to an easy arm chair, and then said in a low voice,

"Friend Barnum, what is up?"

"A mighty big thing for you," I replied, "if you will keep it a profound secret for three days."

The doctor's eyes sparkled with delight as he squeezed my hand, and said: "My dear Barnum, I pledge honor not to divulge it to a living being till you say the word."

"Buy the first Jenny Lind ticket at auction even if you pay high for it," I replied, "and let every newspaper in America and Europe announce that Dr. Brandreth, Junior, the maker of the celebrated 'Brandreth's Pills,' secured the first Jenny Lind ticket, at fifty or a hundred dollars, as the case may be."

The doctor smiled, and replied: "Pretty good, Barnum, especially for you, if you can sell a ticket at that rate."

I was surprised at the calmness of his reply, and said: "Yes, Doctor, it may be good for me, but that doesn't prevent it from being a successful stroke of policy for you."

The doctor gave me a sly wink, and merely remarked: "Barnum, we all know you have a fertile brain and don't miss any chance to feather your nest. Your foresight is remarkable, and generally quite profitable."

Nettled by the doctor's temporary obtuseness, I replied: "Dr. Brandreth, I have long admired your ingenious methods of advertising 'Brandreth's Pills,' but if you can't see the value to your business of my suggestion, I beg to say you will surely regret it when that first Jenny Lind ticket falls into other hands."

The doctor was so strongly impressed that my idea was a purely selfish one that several minutes elapsed before he began to see that, notwithstanding I should be benefited by the proposed plan, it would not prevent him from reaping a harvest at the same time. He then said: "I thank you for the hint, Mr. Barnum. Perhaps twenty or thirty dollars expended for the first ticket would not be a bad investment; so I will send my cashier to the auction, with instructions to make a liberal bid."

Bidding the doctor good bye, I walked down Broadway feeling that my plan had put two worthy and ambitious gentlemen into a frame of mind that would result in greater credit for the Jenny Lind enterprise.

On Saturday, September 7th, 1850, three thousand anxious persons entered Castle Garden, New York, to attend the sale of the Jenny Lind tickets, notwithstanding the fact that the lessees of the Garden made their usual charge of twelve and one-half cents for crossing the bridge and thus securing admission to their premises. Dr. Brandreth's cashier and Genin's book-keeper were in the audience, each unaware of the presence and purpose of the other. The auctioneer mounted his stand, and calling "order," said with great impressiveness: "Ladies and gentlemen, I am now going to offer you the first choice of a seat with privilege of ten seats at the same price, for the first concert in America of the world-renowned Swedish Nightingale, Mademoiselle Jenny Lind."

A rustle of expectation throughout the vast edifice was heard for a few moments, and then ensued a profound silence. "What am I offered?" asked the auctioneer.

"Twenty-five dollars!" startled the audience, nobody knowing that it was bid by Dr. Brandreth's cashier. The vast multitude held its breath for a moment, when "Fifty dollars!" was heard. The audience could not withhold a rousing cheer.

"Seventy-five dollars!" followed in quick succession, and after the lapse of half a minute, as the auctioneer was about to knock it down, "A hundred and fifty dollars!" from Genin's agent electrified the listeners.

"Two hundred dollars!" quickly came like a clap of thunder.

"Two hundred and twenty-five dollars!" exclaimed a voice in a strong and determined tone.

The three thousand ladies and gentlemen present were fairly bewildered. A minute elapsed, when the auctioneer who had not had a chance to open his mouth since the bidding commenced, said:

"Is this the last bid, gentlemen? Bid quick or you lose it. Going, going, gone. Who is the lucky purchaser?"

"John N. Genin, the hatter!" cried a stentorian voice. The audience seemed thunderstruck, but in an instant there went up, "Three cheers for Genin, the hatter!" which were distinctly heard on the main land and reverberated around the world.

I saw Mr. Genin soon after the auction was over, congratulated him on his pluck and success, and asked him out of curiosity how much he would have paid for that choice seat rather than have missed its purchase. He replied:

"I told my book-keeper to bid as high as a thousand dollars, if necessary; and then, as he knew how my bank account stood, he might use his own discretion."

Dr. Brandreth told me the next day that he limited his cashier to two hundred dollars, not dreaming that any one else would bid half that; "but," he added, "I had better have paid five thousand dollars than to have missed securing the first Jenny Lind ticket. Such a splendid chance for notoriety will never again offer."

Genin made a fortune out of it. His hats were bought by nearly everybody; and as he was careful to make a good article, well worth the price paid, he secured thousands of permanent customers. Almost every man visiting New York was sure to wear home a "Genin hat," thus causing his neighbors to envy him till they in turn secured a similar prize.

In Dubuque, Iowa, it was told that twenty or thirty men were awaiting at the post-office the arrival of the mail containing a newspaper account of the Jenny Lind ticket sale. One man seized the paper and read aloud to his anxious friends: "The first Jenny Lind ticket sold for two hundred and twenty-five dollars to Genin, the hatter!"

Every man present involuntarily took off his hat to see if it was made by Genin. Sure enough, one man who wore an old hat not worth fifty cents found Genin's name in it. He instantly became the hero of the hour. All shook hands with him and tendered their congratulations. One gentleman exclaimed:

"My dear sir, that hat is valuable. Preserve it carefully, and hand it down as an heirloom."

Another man called out: "Jim, you are lucky, but don't be mean. Give us all a chance; set up your Genin hat at auction."

"Jim," not being overburdened with cash, and caring more for money than his hat, acceded to this proposition. Taking the hat from his head he cried out: "Here she goes, goes! Give us a fair bid for the real Genin hat!"

The first bid was one dollar, and within the space of five minutes it was knocked down at seven dollars and fifty cents, and paid for.

News-papers and magazines all over the country, and indeed in all countries, spoke of Genin's achievement. The London Times devoted nearly two columns to the Jenny Lind excitement in America, the auction sale of tickets, and "Genin, the hatter," and said that at the first concert Mr. Genin ought himself to occupy the prize seat, and have a huge hat suspended over it so that the purchaser might be recognized by the audience.

Of course all these things brought grist to my mill by helping to increase the excitement over what was undoubtedly the greatest musical triumph of any age or country.

Somebody sent a poem to a Western journal, beginning: "Old friend, companion of my youth, a bumper to the brim." But when the compositor turned "bumper" into "bummer" there was a roar in the office, and the editor was obliged to wear crutches for two weeks.

A man escaped from a Rhode Island jail by making a rope of newspapers twisted together. Newspapers have got many a scoundrel into jail, but they are not often used to get scoundrels out.



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